

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 3625

EXDIS

EXCLUSIVE FOR EA-DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MILLER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP

SUBJ: QUERY: WOULD A BICENTENNIAL-CONNECTED U.S. VISIT BY GENERAL
TIN OO BE OUT OF QUESTION?

1. GENERAL TIN OO, ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF AND DEFENSE MINISTER, IS A REVOLUTIONARY WAR BUFF OF LONG STANDING. HE HAS HINTED TO ME AND DATT ABOUT HOW FASCINATING IT WOULD BE TO VISIT THE USA AND TOUR THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR BATTLEFIELDS IN, SAY, JULY 1976. I HAVE SO FAR KEPT AS NONCOMMITTAL AS POSSIBLE ON THE SUBJECT, AWARE OF THE SENSITIVITIES INVOLVED IN AN ELECTION-YEAR VISIT BY A MILITARY MAN FROM A MILITARY REGIME THAT WINS FEW GOLD STARS IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS DEPARTMENT, NOT TO MENTION OUR DISPLEASURE WITH BURMA'S RECENT UNGA VOTES. ON THE OTHER HAND, STRICTLY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF US BILATERAL INTERESTS IN BURMA, NOTABLY NARCOTICS CONTROL AND (POTENTIALLY) PROMOTION OF REFORM, I MUST SAY THAT A TIN OO VISIT WOULD HAVE A CLEAR PAY-OFF.

2. GENERAL TIN OO'S IMPORTANCE FOR THE NARCOTICS EFFORT IN THIS COUNTRY WHERE NARCOTICS CONTROL IS PRIMARILY A JOB FOR THE MILITARY IS OBVIOUS. IT IS LESS OBVIOUS WHAT SPECIFICALLY WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED BY A VISIT AT THIS TIME, BUT I BELIEVE THAT BY MID-1976 WE MIGHT WELL PROFIT FROM THE IMPACT OF ANOTHER HIGH-LEVEL VISIT, IF ONLY TO SUSTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF OUR COOPERATION AND CONSOLIDATE PROGRESS.

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PAGE 02 RANGOO 03625 240541Z

3. OF THE TWO MEN MOST OFTEN MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS TO

NE WIN, GENERAL TIN OO IS CONSIDERABLY THE MORE LIBERAL. HE IS LESS DOCTRINAIRE THAN GENERAL SAN YU, AND MORE COMPATIBLE WITH PROPONENTS OF PRAGMATIC ECONOMIC POLICIES LIKE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER U LWIN. ON CIVIL RIGHTS, WHAT LITTLE INFORMATION WE HAVE ABOUT THE INNER COUNCILS OF THE GUB SUGGESTS THAT GENERAL TIN OO IS AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE FAVORED MODERATE TACTICS IN DEALING WITH DEMONSTRATORS. HIS RELATIVELY SYMPATHETIC PUBLIC IMAGE IS CONSISTENT WITH THIS VIEW. IF A US VISIT REINFORCED EITHER GENERAL TIN OO'S POWER POSITION OR HIS MODERATE PRAGMATIC POLICY INCLINATIONS, THIS WOULD REPRESENT SOME ENHANCEMENT OF PROSPECTS FOR MODERATION AND REFORM IN BURMA. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS NO REASON TO EXPECT A VISIT TO PRODUCE RAPID OR DRAMATIC PROGRESS IN ANY DIRECTION.

4. I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR CANDID REACTIONS. I LEAVE IT TO YOUR JUDGEMENT WHETHER THE POSSIBILITY OF A VISIT IS SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO BE WORTH EXPLORING TENTATIVELY WITH PHIL HABIB, AMBASSADOR VANCE, AND/OR THE BICENTENNIAL FOLKS.
OSBORN

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